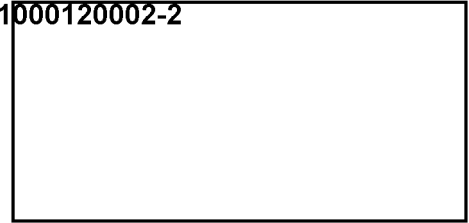




Director of
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National Intelligence Daily (Cable)

20 January 1979

State Dept. review completed

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SITUATION REPORT

IRAN

The massive demonstrations yesterday in Tehran again illustrated the Islamic opposition's ability to mobilize vast popular support against the government. The marches followed discussions between key government and opposition leaders aimed at ensuring nonviolence.

[redacted] told US officials yesterday that SAVAK chief Moghaddam met on Thursday with Mohammad Beheshti--Ayatollah Khomeini's chief lieutenant in Iran--and with the leader of the Liberation Movement of Iran, Mehdi Bazargan, to discuss crowd control and security measures. [redacted] the opposition and security officials may hold further meetings aimed at maintaining order in the capital. [redacted]

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ALERT MEMORANDUM

CHINA-VIETNAM-USSR

The Daily presents an Alert Memorandum on the Chinese military buildup along the border with Vietnam, Chinese options for military action, and the Soviet reaction to the Chinese activities. [REDACTED]

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Since our Alert Memorandum of 5 January, which warned of possible direct Chinese military action against Vietnam, China has continued its military buildup along the Sino-Vietnamese frontier. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] suggest of-
tensive rather than defensive preparations. Chinese propaganda is building a case that the Vietnamese are intruding on Chinese territory, and Chinese officials abroad are spreading the word that China is prepared to "strike hard" in retaliation for Vietnamese troublemaking. A few officials have asserted that China is deliberately seeking an occasion to "teach the Vietnamese a lesson." In sum, the Chinese appear to be completing [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] groundwork that will enable them to take military action against Vietnam at a time of their choosing. [REDACTED]

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There are formidable political objections to such action. The Chinese must weigh the impact of military action on Sino-US ties and the risk of undermining domestic support in the US for the normalization arrangements just worked out. China must also consider possible Soviet reaction to any action against Vietnam, as well as the effectiveness of the Kampuchean resistance. Considerations of Chinese prestige and a desire not to be considered a "paper tiger" by nations in Southeast Asia, on the other hand, appear to play an important part in Chinese calculations. These points have particularly been stressed by the more candid Chinese officials. [REDACTED]

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Should the Chinese initiate action against Vietnam, they would certainly attempt to avoid a protracted conflict with their southern neighbors. A drive into Vietnamese territory, limited in time and distance, followed

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by a relatively rapid withdrawal, in the manner of China's 1962 conflict with India, is the most likely option. We still cannot rule out more forceful action nor can we rule out a miscalculation that would make an early Chinese withdrawal difficult, thus extending and raising the level of action. The Chinese could strike at any time--even before Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping (Teng Hsiao-ping) arrives in the US. [REDACTED]

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Soviet media, while maintaining a drumfire of criticism of Beijing (Peking) for border provocations against Vietnam and for using military pressure, including troop concentrations, in an effort to "intimidate" Vietnam, have avoided addressing the contingency of direct Chinese military action against Vietnam, much less characterizing it as imminent. Several Soviet officials, including a high-ranking diplomat in Washington and an experienced China watcher in Moscow, have privately expressed doubt that Beijing would attack. [REDACTED]

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The failure of Soviet media to raise the Chinese attack contingency, relieving Moscow of the need to address the question of Soviet response, suggests either that the Soviets do not regard it as a serious possibility, or if they do, that they wish to avoid committing themselves to any particular course of action in response. In any case, they have not issued any clear public warning designed to deter Beijing. [REDACTED]

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We believe the Soviet response to any Chinese attack on Vietnam will be contingent on the extent and severity of the Chinese action and its political effects. The USSR may conclude that a shallow and short-lived Chinese incursion would not threaten important Soviet interests

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and might generate important political benefits for Moscow and Hanoi without requiring more than demonstrative measures of support for Vietnam, short of direct military action. Such measures might include consultations, additional conspicuous aid, a naval show of force, and troop movements on the Soviet side of the border. A deeper and more sustained Chinese invasion would be more likely to evoke more significant Soviet actions. These might include demonstrative air and ground patrolling, and ultimately some sort of military action, probably measured--for example, reoccupation of one or more of the Sino-Soviet border river islands now held by the Chinese. [REDACTED]

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USSR: Leadership Ranking

In recent weeks, the Soviet press has conveyed mixed signals to the Communist Party elite on the status of the top Soviet leaders. The disarray could reflect disagreement within the leadership over the eventual succession to President Brezhnev in the top party and government posts. [REDACTED]

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One of the traditional key status symbols is the number of honorary nominations for election to the Supreme Soviet reported in *Pravda* on the first day of nominations for each Politburo member. The nominations for the election scheduled for early March projected a remarkable stability in the ranking of the leadership since the last election in 1974. Brezhnev's lead, while substantial, has not widened since 1974. Premier Kosygin ranks second with the same number of nominations as before. Party secretaries Suslov and Kirilenko continue to rank on a par in third place. All the other members of the Politburo, including the newly elected Chernenko, a Brezhnev protege, ranked together. [REDACTED]

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Other status symbols in the current round of nominations, however, are at variance with the *Pravda* ranking, particularly in their apparent slighting of Kirilenko. Thus, according to subsequent TASS accounts of local nominating speeches, Kirilenko is no longer considered a "party and state figure" as he was in 1974, but simply a "party figure." By contrast, TASS characterizes Kosygin and Suslov and even junior leaders Chernenko, Kunayev, and Romanov as "prominent party and state figures." The choice of honorific titles might be less tightly controlled than the number of honorary nominations accorded each "candidate" and thus open to political manipulation. If so, the present treatment would suggest an attempt to undermine Kirilenko's position as Brezhnev's most likely successor. [REDACTED]

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A clearer picture of the leadership pecking order should emerge after Soviet leaders begin delivering their election speeches in mid-February. [REDACTED]

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SPECIAL ANALYSIS

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SOMALIA: Political Trends and Party Congress

//President Siad is reported to be contemplating major changes in his government designed to shore up his support at home and to make his strongly authoritarian regime more attractive to the West. The changes appear largely cosmetic and will neither herald a return to genuine democratic rule nor diminish Siad's considerable power.

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//Siad has scheduled an extraordinary congress of Somalia's ruling party in Mogadiscio this weekend to reinstate some--by no means all--of the democratic institutions that prevailed in Somalia before his military takeover in 1969. The congress, for example, has been charged with promulgating a new constitution and reestablishing a parliament, and there are some indications that it may also schedule a general election later this year.

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//It is unlikely that Siad intends to reintroduce a multiparty system. The Somali Socialist Revolutionary Party will almost certainly remain the sole legal party and its hierarchy--with Siad at the top--will continue to run the country.

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//One of the President's major objectives in effecting these changes is to counter growing criticism from tribal opponents who have long resented domination of the government by Siad and his fellow Marehan tribesmen. Siad apparently hopes to broaden the base of his regime by giving a greater sense of involvement to groups that have long been systematically excluded.

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[REDACTED]

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//Siad also hopes to create at least the appearance of democratic institutions in order to gain Western political, diplomatic, and military support.

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[REDACTED]

//As an added inducement to the West--especially to the US--to respond favorably to Somalia's longstanding request for "defensive" military hardware, the new constitution may tone down the regime's irredentist policy toward Somali-inhabited portions of neighboring Ethiopia, Kenya, and all of Djibouti.

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[REDACTED]

Siad may also calculate that a less militant definition of Somalia's irredentist goals will help him improve relations with his neighbors--particularly Kenya where the potential for an eventual rapprochement seems most promising. The new formula, however, still falls short of the formal public renunciation of irredentism demanded by both Kenya and Ethiopia for any major improvement in relations.

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Implications for Somali-Soviet Relations

//While most of the constitutional and governmental changes Siad is apparently considering appear to favor Western interests, the Somali leader is probably not foreclosing his Soviet option.

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[REDACTED] Siad and other senior Somali officials have lost no opportunity in recent weeks to impress upon US officials the importance of at least a symbolic gesture of support prior to the opening of the congress. These demarches have taken on an increased sense of urgency after intensified Ethiopian airstrikes in northern Somalia and growing Somali fears of an im-

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pending Ethiopian invasion. [REDACTED]
//Somali leaders--including Siad--have warned that the lack of such a gesture could be exploited by those in the regime who argue that Somalia has nothing to show for its shift toward the West and that a return to the Soviet orbit--however distasteful--may be the only way to safeguard the country's security interests.// [REDACTED]

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//While the Somalis have been careful to keep open their diplomatic lines to the USSR, the prospects for any significant near-term improvement in relations with Moscow appear slim. Anti-Soviet sentiment--generated by Moscow's switching of alliances to Ethiopia--remains generally strong in Somalia. For their part, the Soviets deeply distrust Siad and will carefully weigh the impact of any improvement in relations with Somalia on their greater equity in Ethiopia.// [REDACTED]

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OVERNIGHT REPORTS

USSR

TASS yesterday announced that President Brezhnev and Politburo member Chernenko, had returned to Moscow earlier in the day. The account said both men had been in Bulgaria for a visit, but referred to only Brezhnev as having stopped over at the Soviet Black Sea resort of Sochi en route home. Radio Moscow's domestic broadcast on the arrival at the airport only cited Brezhnev as having been met by fellow Politburo members. [REDACTED]

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COMMENT: The phrasing chosen is consistent with the Soviet media's concentration on Brezhnev, and Chernenko--a close associate--probably was with Brezhnev for the entire trip. [REDACTED]

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Western Europe-Indochina

//Reporting yesterday on meetings convened this week by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the US Mission at the UN's European headquarters in Geneva comments that West European governments regard the refugee problem in Southeast Asia with trepidation. The US Mission comments that it is clear that there may be limits on what these governments would be willing to do, both in terms of accepting refugees and sharing the financial burden; the US will be expected to pay for any ideas it will offer.// [REDACTED]

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China-Pakistan

Chinese Vice Premier Li Xiennian (Li Hsien-nien) began a three-day, official visit to Pakistan today on his way home from Africa. The US Embassy in Islamabad reported yesterday that it was surprised by the announcement Wednesday, noting it had no hints of the trip in its extensive contacts with Chinese and Pakistani officials over the past two weeks. The Embassy surmises that the trip is designed, in part, to allay Pakistani concerns over Indian Foreign Minister Vajpayee's upcoming trip to Beijing (Peking) and to discuss developments in Iran. [REDACTED]


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